

29-1-1979

Beloved Viswanath,

Today is the sacred birthday of Rev. Raja Maharaj. On this holy occasion I send you my love and best wishes and offer my humble prayers to the Lord for your welfare.

Today is an important day in my life. I woke up at 3 a.m. feeling a strange exhilaration. A break with the past and the dawn of a new future took place in my life this morning. At noon I partook of the Holy Mother's Prasad which our poor Sudarshan had sent me two weeks ago. (Please tell Sudarshan about this) and thus celebrated the day. Nowadays I have lots of work which keeps me fully engaged from 8.30 A.M. to 5 P.M. with only a short break for lunch in the middle. But today I put aside all my work and I am sitting down to write to you this long-delayed letter. I had been thinking of writing to you ever since I came here. Whatever free time I could get was spent in answering those who had written to me. But I was eager to write to you, and was feeling unhappy about my postponing it.

During my recent travels before coming here, I had several occasions to remember you and Sudarshan and a few others. In every Ashrama that I visited I found good and kind hearted monastic brethren. But nowhere did I find a group of so dedicated, devoted, calm and gentle lay brothers (wrongly called "Volunteers") as are connected with Bangalore Ashrama. In fact, the glory of Bangalore Ashrama, as I see it, is all due to its wonderful devotees. In no other Ashrama did I see such a unique phenomenon. For Bangalore Ashrama devotees the Ashrama is an inseparable part of their lives. The worst place that I ever saw was Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta. It looked to me like a hotel. And there is not a single lay brother to assist the inmates; all are paid workers only. When I was staying there I used to think a lot about all of you.

When I first came here I had several problems to solve: (1) First of all, terrible cold of this place, beyond my wildest imagination. After shifting to the Editor's quarters this problem became less as the sun heats the room which has glass on three sides, and I am also provided

with a charcoal stove in the morning. But on cloudy days the cold becomes terrible, again. For the past fortnight we have been experiencing frequent heavy rains and hail storms. Now the temperature is 20 C! But slowly I am getting adjusted to this climate, and also the food.

2) I disliked intellectual work and so hated my present job. Slowly this also is not troubling me much nowadays.

3) An important difficulty is my inability to accept any culture other than Kannada culture. Through experience I had found that Kannada people are the most gentle, service-minded, loving, devoted - the most cultured people in India. And this culture is in perfect harmony with my own nature. Malayalis are vulgar; North Indians are violent. I have got so much accustomed and adjusted to Kannada culture which is so congenial for my own spiritual development, that I find it impossible now to identify myself with any other culture. Hereafter I will have to live as a stranger wherever I go.

4) But the problem which troubled me most was the disconnection of my spiritual life-line. For years I had built up my inner life on Prayer and my main life-line was the Holy Mother's Shrine. When this was suddenly cut, and I was sent to a place where even making a pranam or waving an incense stick is prohibited, I found myself stranded on a lonely island without any support whatsoever. But I continued my prayer intensely. The evanescence of worldly supports only intensified my faith in God as the only support to be relied upon. After a month of struggle, I began to feel a "new-life-line" developing within. This will be a permanent one, not dependent upon external support. And I am once again feeling the inflow of divine grace. Moreover, I am nowadays feeling closer to my Guru Dev Rev. Yatiswaranandaji Mj. I feel he is guiding my inner life now. As days pass by I understand his greatness more and more. Formerly he was only my Gurudev. Now he has become my ideal as well.

you I don't know whether your expectations about me would ever be fulfilled. But even within the short time, I have been here, two revolutionary changes have taken place within me.

1) My whole spiritual life until I came here had been one long continuous struggle for success in meditation. The first few years were spent in intense prayer and the remaining were spent in both prayer and meditation. Though I got considerable benefit from prayer I was perhaps getting stuck up in external images. That was the main reason why, I believe, that the Lord took me away from Bangalore. Along with prayer, I was also meditating at Bangalore and this I continued here also. I had known for many years that meditation itself could act as a limiting factor, as I had observed several people spending their whole lives in meditation and getting precious little progress. I thought intense yearning alone will take us beyond passive meditation. This is true indeed. But I did not know a technique of going beyond meditation - beyond concentration on images. I only knew how to pray and wait: this may be called "waiting meditation." This was what I was doing for many years at Bangalore.

After coming here, the Lord is teaching me how to actively seek the Lord beyond the images, where He really is. This may be called "seeking meditation." It is a kind Nididhyasana on a Personal God.

Soon I found that meditation itself was an obstacle to my spiritual quest. It was holding me back. I wanted inner freedom to go forth in the secret, deep, interior, search for the Lord. Finally, the grace of the Lord has freed me from the "meditation shackles" and now I am free to seek without any serious hindrance. Where this search will end; I have no idea. The Power that guided me so far is always there to support, sustain and direct my lonely soul. This interior freedom has produced great changes in my life. The sorrow caused by separation from Mother's Shrine of Bangalore is now disappearing. A new hope, a new light, a new happiness is dawning on the horizon of my mind.

God often gives you something when you no longer need it. I am now getting the deepest concentration I ever had in my life, but I have no use for it. My soul aflame with intense love is sailing in the unchartered sea of the Spirit - to the land of the eternal Sun.

2) The second change that has come over me is my attitude towards others. During the early years of my monastic life at Bangalore, I was interested solely in my own spiritual welfare. My Gurudev Rev.S.Y. used to tell me: "I want salvation - that is not the ideal. I want salvation along with others - that is the ideal." I could not accept it at that time. Again, he used to advise me, and also others, to pray everyday for the welfare of others. This also I could not do because I myself was in hot water, how then could I pray for others? Since I myself had so many problems to solve I thought my prayer for others would not be genuine or sincere. Only a little more than year ago did my attitude change. By that time a good deal of my own problems had vanished and I was free enough to think about others. And a desire to help others also came to me. But then, when I had hardly set my foot on this new ground, the Lord took me away from Bangalore. Why? I was puzzled. I was thrown into this utterly lonely place with no devotees. Then I thought it was the Lord's will that I should go back to my solitary life and lonely search for personal salvation. In fact, during the first month and a half I had banished all thoughts about others, and was determined to become a recluse or a hermit for the rest of my life. But the merciful hand of the Lord again manipulated my heart for His own divine Lila and brought about a great change in my life. An intense desire to dedicate my whole life for the SPIRITUAL service of the devotees of Thakur and Ma has invaded my heart recently. I now wish to undergo such training as will enable me to serve others even after my death, in a subtle body. I think such a confidence and faith and such a desire come to all spiritual men who follow the devotional path. The famous saying:

("The gods who control men's Karmas - are strict in giving them the fruits of their actions (as they sow, so they reap: Karmaphala follows like a shadow); but the holy men are full of compassion for the suffering"). The idea of spiritual fellowship is now coming very strongly to me. We can all render so much help mutually. The grace of the Lord is slowly erasing from my mind the artificial distinctions between monks and lay devotees, and also between men and women. Everywhere I only find poor human souls struggling in the turbulent stream of life.

Two conditions are necessary in order to qualify oneself for this work: 1) We must conquer solitude and boredom; and learn to stand on our own Self utterly alone - depending on God alone. Only such a person can really help others and love others sincerely without attachment. 2) Unimpeded love. Pure unselfish divine love, untainted by human desires. All people do not have the same capacity for love. Especially when it comes to love for God, the differences are still more striking.

Well, all these I am writing only because you expressed some 'hopes' about me. Otherwise I would not have written. They are not actually meant for you. Please do not allow these ideas to influence you now. You must first of all know where you are and what you actually need. These ideas mentioned above may be useful later on. But only remember always, O m n i a V i n c i t A m o r ("Love conquers all").

You should avoid two things: 1) Undigested Advaita, and 2) Exaggerated notions about grace. In all the Ashramas I have visited I have found the bad influence of these two. I told you about this several times when I was at Bangalore. The first one makes us depend too much upon our own egos (and not on the true Self) and also neglect the help of Prayer, Puja, Shrine, etc. The second one makes people careless. Please think deeply about all this.

For some years I was searching for a young man to whom I could unburden my heart and also communicate what little the Lord had granted me. But I could not find any one - monastic or lay. Sudarshan and Jagadish Mj came closest but they had several difficulties. It was this that had made me avoid you and other Bangalore lay brothers and lead a solitary life. When I was in Bangalore, I lived a solitary life even though surrounded by a crowd of good people. (Here also I am solitary, but surrounded by forest trees, deer, leopards, bears, etc.) I kept myself aloof not out of egoism. Moreover I wanted you to depend only on God and not on me.

Only after I had left Bangalore and after I had long talks with a number of Brahmacharins at Belur Math (I spent 3 happy days there in their holy company), did it suddenly dawn upon me that many of these people were every sincere and even struggling hard and what they lacked was only spiritual power. Mere words are of not of much use. Power is to be supplied. Now I am more sympathetic towards all of you than I formerly was.

In this connection I wish to mention my meeting Prabhakar. Of all the youngmen with whom I came in contact in recent years, he impressed me most. I immediately felt that he was the man I had for long been searching for to communicate my inner contents. If only we had met at least a year ago, it would have benefitted us both. But destiny willed it otherwise. However, I found him going in a wrong direction. We had some frank talks. I don't know how his future will take shape. But he has great potential in him and shows much promise. But at present, he is not as developed as many take him to be; he has to struggle for many years more. Of course, everything depends upon Lord's will.

Now to take up your questions:

I do not know how to express my gratitude to you for all the help you have rendered me. You have taken so much trouble for those charts. God alone must reward you for all that. I have no urgent need for those charts now. I asked for them because Jagadish Mj is coming here; so he could carry it. Hope you are quite well. I am getting adjusted to this climate. Now the temperature is 2 degree C! Yesterday there was a hail storm. Well life is harsh here and I need this Tapasya to harden a little. However, I am safe at the lotus feet of Sri Thakur and Mother. Let our whole life constantly flow towards that luminous abode!

With love and best wishes and prayers,

Yours affectionately,
Bhajananda



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